

# COME TO THE TABLE

A LENTEN CHALLENGE  
TO RECLAIM  
THE FAMILY MEAL



20 FAMILY MEALS  
IN 40 DAYS!

FAMILY  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

# WHY FAMILY DINNER?

## CONNECTION

We eat facing each other. It's the sitting face-to-face, inviting interaction, give-and-take, that matters most.

## COMMUNICATION

As we tell stories and catch up on the day's ups and downs, children are invited to listen and share their ideas, dreams, and opinions. This builds their muscles of communication.

## DISCIPLESHIP

As we discuss events of the day, we will naturally weave in faith and explore what it means to honor Christ in each situation.

## IDENTITY & BELONGING

When we're sharing a hearty meal and a heartfelt conversation, we're developing a sense of who we are as a family.

## LEARNING

Planning and preparing meals together teaches kids real-life skills.

## RESTING

In the fast-paced, tech-saturated culture a slow meal around a table with people we care about takes off the stress, replenishes the joy, and renews the strength.

# HELPFUL TIPS

- 1 Make it a priority, put it on the schedule, and just do it.
- 2 Shut off the TV. Do not bring phones or any types of screens to the table.
- 3 Make dinner time special by introducing table linens and cloth napkins.
- 4 Light candles to give family dinner a sense of formality and wonder.
- 5 Have everyone come to the table at the same time. (It's not about being hungry, but about being together.)
- 6 Feed their bellies with food and nourish their souls with conversation. The idea is to create a safe place—a place where everyone feels free to say whatever is on his or her mind.
- 7 Slow down and savor the process. Dinnertime is not a project to push through; it's a celebration of life and family, and the Giver of them both.



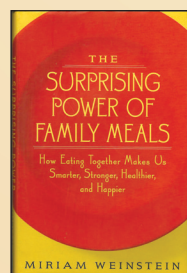
TO SHARE A MEAL — AND NOT JUST FOOD, BUT ALSO AFFECTION, STORIES, EVENTS — IS A FUNDAMENTAL EXPERIENCE.

— POPE FRANCIS

# QUESTIONS TO ASK

Start each meal with one of these conversation starters

1. What's your favorite thing about summer?
2. Turn to the person on your right and tell them what you like most about them.
3. Name one thing you are proud of.
4. Would you rather live on a mountaintop or on an island?
5. What super power would you choose?
6. If we won a family trip anywhere in the world, where would you want to go?
7. Name a person that you wish you could be like




All quotes, unless otherwise stated, are from Miriam Weinstein's book *The Surprising Power of Family Meals*.


**Supper is as much about talking as it is about eating.**


8. What is (was) your favorite toy?
9. Name the last person that you met.
10. Describe the perfect snow day.
11. What's your favorite book?
12. What is a nice thing someone in your family has done for you recently?
13. What is your favorite food that is yellow?
14. How did you meet your best friend?
15. What's your favorite Thanksgiving dish?
16. What chore do you wish you never had to do again?
17. What musical instrument do you wish you could play?
18. Which pet would you rather have: a pot bellied pig or a chimpanzee?
19. Which is your favorite Christmas tradition?
20. What is the most beautiful place you've ever seen?

**Without shared meals, a home is just a place to stay.**

# GAMES TO PLAY


 Each person tells two stories that happened to them that day, one that is true and one that is made up. Everyone guesses which story was true, and which was not. ....


 I Remember When... Everyone completes the sentence. Decide whether the sentence will be something about yourself, or something about another person at the table. As in, "I remember when I couldn't stop hiccupping in class." Or, "I remember when Mom locked the keys in the car and made us miss The LEGO movie."


 At the count of 3, everyone puts one fist out toward the center of the table with their thumb either up or down. If everyone but one person has a thumb up (or down), that person must take a drink of his or her milk (water). (In other words, the odd person out, drinks milk, eats vegetables or says something nice about the person on their left.) If everyone does the same thing with their thumb, or your family is split, count to 3 and try it again ....


The dinner table is a calm spot in the day.

# GAMES TO PLAY

 Using a wooden baking spoon or silver spoon, say, "Magic spoon, magic spoon, if I had three wishes I'd wish for..." Take turns going around the table waving your magic spoon and naming your three wishes. ....







 Everyone takes a drink of milk and makes his or her best milk moustache. Then vote on who made the biggest milk moustache. The biggest milk moustache in town wins! ....

 One person hums a melody; the others try to name the tune. First one to get it right goes next! ....

 Going around the table, everyone takes part by continuing this pattern: One cow, two ears, on a farm // Two cows, four ears on a farm and so on. Whoever breaks the pattern takes a sip of milk and starts the game over. (You can also add "four legs" to the pattern—if you dare.)





Family dinners foster togetherness and impart meaning and joy into family life.

# STORIES TO TELL

-  Tell the stories of your children's birth or adoption. ....
-  Tell your salvation story—the time when you opened your heart and life to God. ....
-  Tell your love story. How did you meet? What did you like about each other? Where was your first date? How did you propose? What was your wedding day like? ....
-  Tell the children about your childhood. Make sure to talk about a memorable ... Christmas, vacation, school teacher, pet, gift you had received, toy, collection, sports game and so on. ....
-  Tell about some fears you had as a child and how you overcame them.
-  With your words paint a picture of the future you envision for each of your children. It will do them good to hear about the dreams you have for them. ....

Dinnertime conversations are a major source of family knowledge. Hearing the family tales again and again over time anchors our sense of who we are, and gives us a feeling of belonging and hope.

# JUST FOR PARENTS

-  What do you recall of **YOUR OWN** childhood suppers?
-  How did they **SHAPE YOU?**
-  What would you like to pass along; what would you **DEFINITELY CHANGE?**
-  When your children are your age, **WHAT MEMORIES** will they have?



**WHAT COUNTS IS THE SITTING AROUND TOGETHER IN A RELAXED SETTING, SHARING LIFE, ENJOYING EACH OTHER, DOING WHAT FAMILIES DO.**

# PRAYERS TO PRAY

*Come Lord Jesus be our Guest,  
Our morning joy, our evening rest,  
And with our daily bread impart,  
Your love and peace to every heart. Amen.*

*Lord, we thank You  
for the food before us,  
the friends beside us,  
the love between us;  
And Your Presence among us. Amen.*

*God is great, God is good. Let us thank him for our food.  
By his hands we all are fed. Thank you Lord for our  
daily bread. Amen.*

*Thank you God for this food.  
For rest and home and all things good.  
For wind and rain and sun above,  
But most of all for those we love. Amen.*



Let us always meet each other with smile, for the smile  
is the beginning of love.  
— Mother Teresa

## THE RULES

1. NO ELECTRONICS (including TV) during the meal.
2. You must say grace before the meal.
3. No discussing discipline or chores, like who forgot to take out the garbage or didn't do their homework.
4. No one can be excused until the whole family has been at the table for 20 minutes.
5. The family meal can be any meal of the day, not just dinner.

## WHO'S IN?

Family members all sign below and hang this on your fridge.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

# RIDDLES TO SOLVE

## DROPPED CALL .....

Amy was in the middle of a conversation that she wanted to continue, so why did she purposely hang up her phone?





### CLUES:


- [ 1 ] No one else was involved other than the person Amy was talking to on the phone.
- [ 2 ] Amy's cell phone was fully charged, and Amy didn't have an incoming call.
- [ 3 ] Although she hung up her phone, her conversation wasn't interrupted.


ANSWER: Amy hung up her cell phone because she met the person she was talking to and continued her conversation in person.

# THINGS TO TRY

 Cover your dining table with a big piece of craft paper. Put out crayons, water paints, and pens. Have the children draw the fanciest, fun, or craziest table settings, flower arrangements, and name cards right on the paper. ....

 Instead of starting your dinner with a prayer, start it with a song! The Doxology is a perfect way to celebrate God's goodness and greatness. Not familiar with the Doxology? Sing along with Anthem Lights' version on YouTube. ....

 Fancify your water! All it takes is a cinnamon stick, a few mint leaves, cucumber slices, or wedges of citrus, and suddenly tap water becomes thirst-quenching spa water. ....

 Beforehand, write-down after-meal chores and one special surprise (like an extra book at bedtime, extra dessert, special family game, etc.) on pieces of paper. Tape these randomly to the bottom of the dining chairs. (You can also place them in a bowl and pass it around.) After dinner, everyone peels the paper from his or her chair and reads what it says. While everyone else gets to work, one lucky person gets an extra piece of pie or extra screen time. ....

**Meal time isn't about eating; it's about sharing with the people we care about most.**

# ABOVE AND BEYOND

★ One evening surprise your kids by serving breakfast for supper. ....

★ One evening finish your dinner the way Jesus did in John 13. Bring out a basin and a towel. Wash your children's feet, and while you're doing that, tell the child whose feet you're washing something unique you like about them. This is one night when children will not be expected to help with the clean-up. ....

★ Encourage your child to host an open house. Invite friends, neighbors and newcomers, especially children who usually aren't invited to activities. As you prepare for the open house, discuss ways to welcome others and share what God has given your child — his home and belongings. Talk about giving up favorite seats, offering beverages, letting guests go first in activities and listening attentively. Then pray for each person who will attend. Enlist your child to prepare snacks, decide on games to play and make welcome packs. Include a card and pen for guests to write down prayer requests. They can drop them in a basket by the door as they leave. ....

When Jesus himself wanted to explain to his disciples what his forthcoming death was all about, he didn't give them a theory, he gave them a meal. – N.T. Wright

# 4 FOUR QUESTIONS TO ASK AROUND THE DINNER TABLE



1. What was the **BEST** part of your day?
2. What was the **WORST** part of your day?
3. Where did you see **GOD** at work today?
4. What **MISTAKE** did you make today?



Dear Lord,  
During the 40 days of Lent, help us not to focus  
on what we're giving up, but on the One who  
gave up everything for us. May we feel Your  
loving presence at the table with us, drawing us  
closer to each other and closer to You.

## ***TRACK YOUR PROGRESS***

